



Special Event

Press Release: Sign Here! It's Constitution Week!

The Constitution is certainly one of our most important documents. Created 217 years ago, 11 years after the Declaration of Independence, it defines the very basis of how we run our country today. It describes how the Congress will work, the powers of the President, taxes, and the workings of the Supreme Court. The first ten amendments to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, describes our fundamental rights and responsibilities, including the right to free speech, assembly, religion, and the right to bear arms and have a jury trial. Subsequent amendments were no less dramatic. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, the Fifteenth gave African Americans the right to vote; and the Nineteenth the right for women to vote.

And the Constitution is alive and well today. If you picked up the Anchorage Daily News today, you may read about some case the Supreme Court is debating. The Constitution, just 4,400 words, is still being interpreted today. In fact, many of these interpretations are extremely controversial.... abortion, concealed weapons, state vs federal rights and responsibilities... and have to do with many issues right here in Alaska. So the Constitution is very much a living document.

For the last nine years the National Park Service and Alaska Public Lands Information Center have participated in Constitution Week sponsored by the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, PA. The event encourages citizens of all ages to deepen their understanding of our nation's founding document. It is celebrated by having adults, families, and students sign a replica of the Constitution, remembering the rights we enjoy today because of this document. Although Constitution Week is formally celebrated September 17-23, the visitor center extends the event one week

each year. Public signing will occur September 17-30 at the Anchorage Alaska Public Lands Information Center, downtown at 605 West 4th Avenue in the Old Federal Building, kitty-corner from the Log Cabin Visitor Center. Each signer receives a pocket Constitution. (Please note that Anchorage Alaska Public Lands Information Center is NOT open on weekends. In addition, visitors must pass through security to enter the Center.)

All signatures will be mailed by the National Park Service to the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia where they will be electronically scanned and become part of a permanent record in the NCC's new museum that opened July 4th, 2003. Since 1991, over 3 million signatures have been collected throughout all fifty states. Signings have occurred with congressmen and senators, in historic costume, and even underwater. Visit www.constitutioncenter.org for more information.

If you have questions or would like more information please call or email Chris Smith at 271-2743 (chris_smith@nps.gov) or Joanne Welch at 271-2741 (joanne_welch@nps.gov).

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